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L2 classroom contexts: deviance, confusion, grappling and flouting

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ABSTRACT

Seedhouse (2004) suggested that L2 classroom interaction can be understood in terms of sub-varieties or L2 classroom contexts. These are the 'interfaces' between pedagogy and interaction in which a particular pedagogical focus combines with a particular organisation of the interaction. However, Conversation Analysis does not see such organisations as a fixed set of prescriptive rules, but as interpretive resources which speakers make use of in order to orientate themselves. Deviant cases are particularly illuminating, so here we look at four kinds of deviant cases in relation to L2 classroom contexts. In the first, teachers and learners grapple for the direction of the pedagogical focus and hence the kind of context which is established. In the second, there is confusion amongst participants as to which context is in operation. In the third type of case we see inexperienced trainee teachers failing to establish a pedagogical focus and L2 classroom context. In the fourth we see experienced teachers deliberately 'flouting' the normal organisation of the L2 classroom in order to achieve particular effects. Implications are that L2 classroom contexts are interactional organisations which are actively constructed and maintained by experienced teachers. Microanalysis can help trainee teachers see what can go wrong, as well as how to get it right.

KEYWORDS

Classroom interaction; teacher development; language learning; L2 classroom contexts; deviant cases

Introduction

In Seedhouse (2004), I introduced the concept of L2 classroom contexts. These are multiple sub-varieties of interaction which occur in L2 classroom contexts, each with its own basic pedagogical focus and corresponding organisation of turn-taking, sequence and repair. In the L2 classroom, a particular pedagogical focus (e.g. repeat whatever the teacher says) is reflexively related to a particular speech-exchange system. As the pedagogical focus varies, so the organisation of turn-taking, repair and sequence varies. Seedhouse (2004) illustrated the main argument by reference to four different L2 classroom contexts as examples; form and accuracy contexts, meaning and fluency contexts, task-oriented contexts and procedural contexts. The study did not suggest that it had characterised all of the L2 classroom contexts which occur and characterisations of other contexts may be found in Seedhouse (1996). L2 classroom contexts are

sub-varieties of L2 classroom interaction in which a particular pedagogical aim enters into a reflexive relationship with a particular organisation of the interaction.

It is suggested that L2 classroom contexts should be understood not only as institutional sub-varieties, but also as the *interfaces* between pedagogy and interaction and thus as the environments through which the institutional business is accomplished.

Conversation Analysis (CA) does not see findings in terms of interactional organisations such as turn-taking and adjacency pair as a fixed set of prescriptive or regulative rules which must be followed. Rather, they are constitutive norms or interpretive resources which interactants make use of in order to orientate themselves within and to make sense of the ongoing interaction. In the same way, L2 classroom contexts are findings, interactional organisations which have emerged from the analysis of data and function as constitutive norms. As usual in CA methodology, deviant cases (in which speakers do not follow the norms) are particularly illuminating, or as Heritage (1995) puts it, deviant cases often serve to demonstrate the normativity of practices. In Seedhouse (2004) the presentation of L2 classroom contexts involved teachers presenting a pedagogical focus and learners producing turns which matched the intended pedagogical focus fairly neatly. However, as all L2 teachers know, things do not always go as planned in L2 lessons. The question is therefore whether the analytical framework and methodology presented in Seedhouse (2004) is still able to provide meaningful and useful analyses when things do not go as planned in L2 lessons, or is it simply a fair-weather framework and methodology which cannot cope with turbulence?

In the data there are four kinds of deviant cases in relation to L2 classroom contexts. These are not intended as watertight categories, but as illustrations of the kinds of turbulence which teachers have to deal with. In the first, teachers and learners grapple for control of the pedagogical focus and hence the kind of context which is established. In the second, there is confusion as to which context is in operation. In the third, inexperienced trainee teachers fail to establish a pedagogical focus and L2 classroom context. In the fourth, experienced teachers 'flout' the normal organisation of the L2 classroom in order to create particular effects. These deviant case analyses were not included in Seedhouse (2004) for lack of space, as noted on p.206. This article therefore seeks to extend the conception of L2 classroom contexts first presented in 2004, and to clarify how they function in practice. The study employs the model and methodology for the analysis of L2 classroom interaction outlined in Seedhouse (2004), using extracts from a large database of L2 lessons (described in Seedhouse (2004, 85)) collected around the world. The majority of the extracts are from an age when CA transcription systems were not well known and, since the original data are no longer available, the transcriptions are not in line with current CA standards; this is a limitation of the study.

Grappling for the direction of contexts

Because teachers' and learners' motivations and orientations do not always coincide, grappling for the direction of the pedagogical focus and hence the L2 classroom context sometimes occurs. The most common tension between contexts occurs in the data between form and accuracy and meaning and fluency contexts (Seedhouse, 2004). One could also express this in pedagogical terms as tension between a pedagogical focus on form and a focus on meaning. A common scenario in the data is for learners to protest

(generally in an indirect or oblique way) that the form and accuracy context interaction which they are involved in bears little resemblance to real-world meaning, and that they have little interactional space to express personal meanings. In other words, learners often seem to hint that they would like to move more towards a meaning and fluency context. Willis (1992, 176) writes that it is very typical to find 'students escaping from teacher-imposed control, and the teacher trying to bring the focus back to language form.'

In the extract below we can see tension between a focus on form and accuracy and on meaning and fluency and grappling between teacher and student for control of the pedagogical focus and hence the context.

Extract 1

- 1 T: ...OK? Chemical pollution. OK.
- 2 L4: (yawning) Ooo
- 3 T: Trousers. Alright, Carlos (L4), do you wear trousers?
- 4 L4: Always .. All my life.
- 5 LL: (laughter)
- 6 T: Always. You've worn, I have...
- 7 L4: Eh wear wear (inaudible).
- 8 T: I have ... well, do you wear trousers?
- 9 L5: I wear, I wear.
- 10 LL: I wear, I wear.
- 11 L4: Yes, I I do.
- 12 T: Yes, you do. What's how do you say that word?
- 13 L4: Trousers.
- 14 T: Trousers.
- 15 L4: Trousers.
- 16 T: Trousers.
- 17 L4: Trousers.
- 18 L3: Trousers.
- 19 T: Mm hm. Have you got trousers on?
- 20 L3: Yes, I have.
- 21 T: What kind?
- 22 L3: Jeans.
- 23 T: Jean

(Long 1983, 14)

In line 3, T is asking L4 a display question which is intended merely as a prompt for the production of a particular string of linguistic forms by L4. It is obvious from the classroom situation that Carlos does wear trousers. L4, however, responds as if a meaning and fluency context were in operation and as if T were asking a genuine or referential question which requested real information. This highlights the 'absurd' nature of the question. Disrupting expectations and being cheeky are always good sources of humour and the learners laugh. Long, who observed this lesson, comments that the teacher here was reasserting his authority (after line 5) by means of the drill and behaving like a sergeant-major trying to break the spirit of unruly recruits. Long notes (1983, 4) that 'The teacher's initial choice of L4 as recipient of his question seemed to the observer to

be motivated by his recognition that L4 was bored and thereby indirectly challenging the usefulness of the lesson.' Part of the teacher's institutional authority is vested in his/her ability to control the pedagogical focus and speech exchange system in the classroom. A learner who attempts to shift (or challenge) a pedagogical focus or speech exchange system introduced by the teacher is performing a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson 1987). We often find in the data that the teacher takes corrective action to regain control of a pedagogical focus and/or speech exchange system. In the above extract the teacher is, according to Long, quite overt about this; in the following extracts we will see the teacher regaining control in a more subtle way. From the perspective of this article we can also say that the teacher in the above extract is re-establishing the nature of the context as purely form and accuracy through a series of corrections based on formal accuracy, so that when T asks further 'absurd' display questions in lines 19 and 21 T gets the required string of linguistic forms in response.

In the extract below T has been looking at vocabulary items prior to line 1. It is important to know that L2 is male and L6 is female.

Extract 2

- 1 T: okay do you have any questions about using these words? okay?
- 2 L: okay
- 3 L6: yeah
- 4 T: what
- 5 L6: how many- girlfriends do you have here? (to L2)
- 6 L2: o::h
- 7 T: how many **girl**friends (stress 1st syllable) does he have here?
- 8 L6: yes
- 9 L: ((unintelligible))
- 10 L2: are you very interesting? (meaning: interested)
- 11 LL: ((unintelligible))
- 12 T: that's his business. he's not telling you
- 13 LL: (modest laughter)
- 14 L6: I cry
- 15 T: You cry
- 16 LL: (loud laughter)
- 17 T: are you jealous?
- 18 L6: ya

(Van Lier 1988, 160)

According to Van Lier (1988, 160) the above extract shows learners attempting to change a specific interaction type into another one because they prefer just talking to other, more regimented activities. From the perspective of this article, we can say that the learners would like to shift from form and accuracy to meaning and fluency context, from a pedagogical focus on linguistic form to a focus on the expression of personal meanings. In line 1, the teacher constrains the next turn by specifying the next turn activity (asking a question) but does not select a speaker. The teacher also implies that the interaction should remain within a form and accuracy context in that he/she indicates that the questions should be about using specified words. L6 then self-selects and partly conforms to the teacher's constraints by asking a question (line 5). However, the question is not within the allocated area (the use of specified words) and, more importantly, it shifts the context to meaning and fluency context, since it

concerns classroom relationships. It was noted in Seedhouse (2004, 113) that incidences of 'oh' are common in this context (and relatively rare in form and accuracy contexts) since real, new information is being exchanged. In fact this is the second utterance we find within this context in line 6 (the context shift having taken place in line 5). L2 was clearly not expecting this sudden shift. Moreover, when T allocated interactional space to the learners in line 1, it was clearly in order for the learners to ask the teacher him/herself a question. L6 has not only shifted the context but also altered the speech exchange system by addressing a question to L2, thus cutting T out of the interaction. So, as in the previous extract, L6 has in effect performed a face-threatening act. At this stage the teacher could react in a number of ways. The teacher could reject L6's attempt to change the context and the speech exchange system in the 'sergeant-major' fashion we saw in extract 1, for example by insisting that only questions addressed to him/her and concerning the specified words would be allowed. At the other extreme, the teacher could validate the shift of context and speech exchange system by saying nothing and allowing the interaction to flow. What the teacher elects to do in line 7 is a third, medial alternative. The teacher corrects L6's pronunciation, addressing the correction to L6; this turn is doing rather subtle interactional work. It allows L6's limited right to alter the flow of the interaction to some extent but also reasserts the teacher's right to have overall control to some extent. Specifically, the teacher's initial intention was to create a pedagogical focus on form and accuracy in respect of the use of particular words. The learner shifted to meaning and fluency and the teacher's correction is focused on linguistic form rather than on meaning. In other words, T has not yet validated a shift in pedagogical focus. There is no communicative necessity for T to perform a correction because L2 in line 6 has understood L6's question, even if it was mispronounced slightly. T has also clearly understood L6's question. In fact there is no interactional necessity for T to say anything at all if T wishes to validate the shift made by L6. We should also note that L6's question in line 5 uses 'you' addressed to L2, cutting T out of the interaction. T's correction in line 7 transforms 'you' to 'he', thus making it into a question which L6 could address to T as intermediary, which would put T back in the centre of the speech exchange system. So in line 7 the teacher is asserting his/her right to control the L2 classroom context and the focus of the interaction and refusing to be shut out of the speech exchange system.

The interaction continues in line 10 with L2 answering L6's question and addressing the answer to L6. In other words, L2 is attempting to continue in the L2 classroom context and speech exchange system which L6 established, and is skip-connecting back to L6's utterance in line 5. At this stage, the teacher could react in a number of ways. As mentioned before, the teacher could change the context and the speech exchange system back to the way it was in 'sergeant-major' fashion. At the other extreme, the teacher could validate the shift of context and speech exchange system by saying nothing and allowing the interaction to flow. Or the teacher could follow the same strategy as in line 7 and correct the linguistic error which L2 has made in line 10. What T elects to do in lines 12 and 17 is a fourth alternative. The teacher validates the shift of focus and the topic of 'classroom relationships' but does not validate the shift in speech exchange system. So in terms of 'grappling', T is ceding ground in terms of the agenda/activity, but holding firm in terms of being centrally involved in the speech exchange system. T does not correct the linguistic error in line 10 but develops the topic by commenting on the classroom relationship. T takes back control of the speech exchange system and acts as an intermediary between L2 and L6, interpreting (in line 12) L2's reactions to L6. In line 17, T asks

L2 a question related to the topic of classroom relationships which L6 introduced and by this point T has validated the shift in focus but has regained control of the speech exchange system within the new context.¹ So the extract demonstrates complex and fluid patterns of interaction with competition amongst the participants for control of the pedagogical focus and speech exchange system. It also demonstrates the subtlety and complexity of the interactional work which L2 teachers perform.

Confusion by learners in relation to contexts

Tension between a focus on form and accuracy and meaning and fluency can also be manifested in a different way in terms of confusion amongst learners as to which context is operating. We sometimes find evidence of learners believing they are operating in a form and accuracy context, whereas the teacher is intending to operate in a meaning and fluency context. This demonstrates that the pedagogical focus can never be taken for granted; it must be actively set up and managed by the teacher. We can see in the extract below that the intended focus may be analysed and interpreted in different ways by learners. In particular, teacher questions may be intended as genuine questions or display questions and students may misunderstand the intention.

Extract 3

T: Have you got any brothers and sisters, Pedro?
 L: Yes, I have.
 T: You have, good. how many?
 L: Er, no, er I no ...

(Tsui 1987, 341)

As Tsui (1987) points out, the teacher's question is treated as an elicitation of a grammatical form. Teacher's questions are generally understood within a form and accuracy context as directives to make a verbal performance, and so genuine or referential questions produced by the teacher may therefore be mistaken by the learner as a prompt for language practice.

Conversely, we see in the following extract that the learner's language practice can be mistaken for genuine talk by the teacher.

Extract 4

L1: And uh, in the afternoon, uh, I come home and uh, uh, I uh,
 washing my dog.
 T: I wash
 L1: My dog.
 T: Every day you wash your dog?
 L1: No.
 L2: *Il n'a pas de chien!* ((tr: He doesn't have a dog!))
 L1: *Non, mais on peut le dire!* ((tr: No, but we can say it!))

(Lightbown and Spada 1993, 80)

Here L1 has understood that s/he is operating in a form and accuracy context and has to produce a verbal performance without regard to real-world meaning. As Lightbown and Spada (1993, 80) note, "Clearly, in this case, the student's real experience with his dog (or even the fact that he did or did not have a dog) was irrelevant. What mattered was the correct use of the simple present verb."

Tension between form and accuracy context and meaning and fluency context, then, can often cause confusion and communication trouble and indeed laughter.

In the following extract we see another example of tension between form and accuracy context and meaning and fluency context. At this stage of the lesson the learners have been practising the paired structures 'Do you like -ing? Yes, I like -ing or No, I don't like - ing.' A form and accuracy context is clearly in operation.

Extract 5

- 1 T: Ask erm Sokoop, Sokoop being erm a father. Can you ask
- 2 him? Being a father
- 3 L1: Er, yes, er yes. Do you like being a father?
- 4 T: Um, hm.
- 5 L2: Yes, I like. I am er father of four children.
- 6 T: Yes. Listen to her question, though. Say again. Say it
- 7 again.
- 8 L1: Do you like er being a father?
- 9 T: Uhm. Do you like being a father? Do you like being a
- 10 father?
- 11 L2: Yes I like being ... to be
- 12 T: Um hm. Yes.
- 13 L2: Yes I like being. Yes I do.
- 14 T: Yes I do. Yes I do. I like being a father.

(Willis 1992, 173)

T's pedagogical focus here is for L2 to produce a specific string of linguistic forms, namely: 'Yes, I do. I like being a father'. This is evident from line 14. In line 5, L2 appears to believe that it is possible for him to express some kind of personal meaning and volunteers more information than is strictly necessary. This appears to indicate that L2 might wish to express further personal meanings within a meaning and fluency context, and T could at this point have validated such a temporary shift by asking, for example, how many of the children were boys and how many were girls. However, the teacher keeps the focus rigidly on the production of correct linguistic forms and initiates repair until L2 is finally able, in line 13, to produce the required string of forms in at least a partial format. The teacher ensures, then, that the interaction remains within a form and accuracy context. This extract demonstrates the difficulty of combining a focus on form and meaning, discussed in Seedhouse (1997). If the teacher does not initiate repair then incorrect forms are in effect accepted, and if the teacher does initiate repair then the flow of interaction is broken up and it appears that the teacher is not interested in the learners' expression of personal meanings. So in this extract the teacher chose to introduce a question within a form and accuracy context which could well have led to a meaning and fluency context being established. After L2's answer, however, the teacher chose to firmly re-establish the focus on form and accuracy. L2 takes the question in line 3 to be a genuine or referential question and provides an answer as if a meaning and fluency

context were in operation. L2 does not produce the required string of forms, however, in line 5. Willis suggests (1992, 172) that it is difficult for L2 to tell whether the teacher's question is a directive to use a particular form of the target language in the response, or a genuine question which requires an informative and truthful answer. In line 5, then, L2 does not orient to the structure which he is being asked to produce, i.e. he does not orient to T's question as a display question prompting him to produce a structure and hence to the form and accuracy context which is in place. Rather, L2 orients to the question as a referential question within a meaning and fluency context which requires new information to be supplied regardless of linguistic form, i.e. he orients to a meaning and fluency context instead. So we can see that there is a tension between a focus on form and on meaning inherent in the question in line 3. We can term utterances which have such an inbuilt contextual tension **contextually ambiguous utterances**. These often lead to confusion amongst students as to which context is in operation.

Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 296) introduced the concept of 'sequential implicativeness': 'an utterance projects for the sequentially following turn(s) the relevance of a determinate range of occurrences (be they utterance types, activities, speaker selections, etc.).' L2 teachers' questions establish sequential implications for what can be considered a relevant next action, and this article tries to relate interactional problems to the degree of clarity with which sequential implications are signalled in teachers' questions.

Failure by a teacher to establish a context

En route to becoming a successful L2 teacher, there are many skills which a trainee needs to develop. Some of these may be taught on teacher training courses, whilst others may be learnt through trial, error and bitter experience. A particular puzzle for trainee teachers is how it is that experienced teachers manage to create a pedagogical focus, i.e. to get students to do what they want, in an apparently effortless manner. When the trainee teachers give instructions, however, the students often don't understand what to do, the target pedagogical focus is not created and confusion results. There is often a mismatch between what the trainees want the students to do and what the students actually do. In this section, we will try to unravel this puzzle from two angles. We will examine an example of what trainee teachers sometimes do wrong and show how and why their instructions confuse students. We will also look at an example of what experienced teachers typically do right and how they give instructions so that the students are able to carry out the required procedures. In order to do so we will examine in very fine detail transcripts of interaction involving experienced and trainee teachers. Many of the complexities and subtleties of professional discourse may not always be evident during observation or videos and it is often precisely these complexities and subtleties which cause the problems for the newcomer. However, these may sometimes be revealed by fine-grained CA analysis of transcripts which may then be combined with video to create a powerful induction tool.

It will now be argued, by examining 'deviant' cases in extracts from lessons taught by inexperienced teachers who are not yet fully competent in establishing contexts, that the ability to create and manage a pedagogical focus and L2 classroom context is not something automatic and given. Rather, it is a skill or competence which is learned, and that an important part of being a competent teacher is the ability to create and manage

these classroom contexts. The data are from an English L2 lesson with Spanish children in a British language school, and the teacher is a trainee.

Extract 6

- 1 L1: I was drive (0.5) drive drive driving a car?
- 2 T: I was driving a car?
- 3 L1: eh when (0.5) you:: (1.0) eh (1.0) um (0.5) drink a =
- 4 T: = when you =
- 5 L1: = when you drank drank a: a orange
- 6 T: when you drank an orange. OK you were driving the car (0.5) when you
- 7 drank an orange.
- 8 L1: yes
- 9 T: (0.5) OK?
- 10 L1: haha
- 11 T: huhu strange but it's OK correct OK right (0.5) this time let's just think
((looks at textbook))
- 12 about these children of courage we've got Mark Tinker? (0.5)
- 13 who's aged 12 comes from London (0.5) Jackie Martin 14 comes from
- 14 Manchester (0.5) and Daniel Clay who's 13 and comes from Newcastle.
- 15 (0.5) right can you see the pictures? (0.5) can you see them Malta?
- 16 LL: ()
- 17 T: right children of courage what do you think (0.5) children of courage will
- 18 do? (2.0) what do children of courage do. (1.0) or what did they do rather
- 19 what did they do? (2.0) what does courage mean? what's this idea if I am
- 20 courageous (2.0) how would you describe me? (2.5)

(Anthony Peck's video data²)

There is a shift of context in this extract. Prior to line 11 the participants were operating in a form and accuracy context, in which learners had to construct sentences, which combined the past continuous and the past simple. We can see from the teacher's comment in line 11 that the fact that the learner has produced a bizarre sentence is unimportant, since the focus is on the production of a string of formally accurate linguistic forms without regard to 'meaning'. The change to a text-based context is signalled kinesically by the teacher's non-verbal communication, including shifting gaze towards the textbook simultaneously with starting to read information from the textbook concerning the characters. There is also use of shift markers together with slightly raised pitch and volume. The teacher appears therefore to have shifted to a text-based context, but the precise pedagogical focus is unclear, as we shall see. At first (lines 17–19) the teacher appears to want the learners to predict the content of the story ('what do you think children of courage will do?'), and then to describe the content of the story which they have not yet read. Then the teacher tries to elicit the meaning of a single lexical item (line 19), and then asks the learners to supply a description of herself (line 20). So although the learners can be fairly clear that they are now in a text-based context in that they are apparently being required to look at the text and supply an answer from the text, they have been given four partially contradictory sets of pedagogical focus by the teacher.

Extract 6 (continued)

- 21 L2: I describe one person?
 22 T: yes well anybody if if you (0.5) were (0.5) one of these children of
 23 courage (6.0)
 24 L3: don't understand
 25 T: you don't understand . OK people of courage. what would they have
 26 done? what do you think they do? (0.5)
 27 L4: he is on holiday?

(Anthony Peck's video data)

L2 has latched onto the teacher's last instruction (line 20) and tries to clarify whether the required pedagogical purpose is to describe the characters in the text. T's utterance in line 22 does nothing to clarify the issue. L3 also indicates non-comprehension, but rather than clarifying which of the four sets of pedagogical focus, which have already been introduced, the learners should focus on, the teacher actually takes a previous question (from line 17), changes the subject from 'children' to 'people', and changes the tense of the question twice (into the rather difficult conditional perfect and conditional forms) thus confusing the learners further. L4 assumes that the pedagogical aim is to describe what the characters in the text are doing and provides an answer from the textbook in line 27.

Extract 6 (continued)

- 28 T: they're on holiday? no but to be courageous do you understand the word
 29 courageous? courageous? (0.5)
 30 L: no I don't
 31 T: no? courageous (4.0) courageous (2.0) what would you have done?
 32 (2.0) no?
 33 L: no

(Anthony Peck's video data)

So finally the teacher notices that the learners do not understand the lexical item 'courageous', narrows the pedagogical focus down to that item and then (after line 33) provides two long explanations. So we can conclude that, if a shift in context is to be undertaken, it is essential for the teacher to make the nature of the pedagogical focus which creates the context as clear and as explicit as possible. Presenting multiple pedagogical focuses simultaneously is likely to confuse learners. In terms of the notion of 'sequential implicativeness', we can see that it is not clear at all what kind of answers the learners could be expected to provide when asked the questions which the teacher poses, for example 'what's this idea if I am courageous (2.0) how would you describe me?'

Now if we contrast the way that experienced teachers deal with communication problems, we may be able to draw certain preliminary conclusions. With experienced teachers, few examples of miscommunication in relation to procedural matters occur in the data. Experienced teachers do not generally issue elaborate procedural instructions in order to set up contexts; they tend to be simple, clear and focused. In the extract below, we see how an experienced teacher deals with miscommunication concerning

procedural matters. At the start of the extract T has been practising pronunciations of a series of vocabulary items following the model seen in lines 1 and 2.

Extract 7

- 1 T: I've got a sofa a sofa say after me I've got a sofa
 2 LL: I've got a sofa
 3 T: very good and now I need Kjartan and Elge (0.5) can you come
 4 up to me please (1.0) and can you give each one a sheet?
 5 L: sheet?
 6 T: sheet of paper (LL hand out sheets)
 7 T: now again (2.5) listen to me (6.0) I've got a lamp
 8 LL: [I've got a lamp
 9 T: what
 10 T: don't repeat now, don't say after me now. I I say it and you
 11 and you just listen. I've got a lamp. what have you got?
 12 (2.0) raise your hands. What have you got Eirik?
 13 L1: e:r =
 14 T: = can you say =
 15 L1: = I've got a book.
 16 T: right, fine. I've got a telephone. what have you got? Trygve.
 17 L2: I've got a hammer.

(Seedhouse 1996, 314)

In the above extract there is a small change in procedure and focus. Line 2 is the final line of a procedure in which learners repeat what the teacher says. From line 7, however, the procedure is that each student has a different object. The teacher says 'I have a lamp. What have you got?' to an individual student, who replies 'I've got a...' according to which object the student has. This is indicated by movement around the classroom and the handing out of sheets. In line 8, some of the learners try to repeat what the teacher says, that is, they are continuing the procedure and speech exchange system from the previous episode. When the learners show signs of having misunderstood the procedure, the experienced teacher (a) makes clear in line 10 what the learners have done wrong (b) narrows the focus down in lines 10 and 11 by repeating and clarifying the procedural instructions in very simple terms. When the trainee teacher above was confronted with miscommunication concerning procedural instructions, however, the strategy she adopted was virtually the opposite of that of the experienced teacher. She moved away from the procedural instructions already given and enlarged or diluted the focus considerably by issuing multiple differing and even mutually contradictory pedagogical focuses.

Flouting the norms

In CA, interactional organisations have a normative status and interactants often deviate from the norms in order to perform particular social actions (Schegloff 2000). We now consider cases in which experienced teachers deliberately flout the organisational norms of the L2 classroom in creative ways in order to achieve particular effects with the intention of improving motivation and learning. In the extract below the teacher is asking questions to see how much the learners know about the life of John Lennon.

Extract 8

- 1 T: (T shows questions on overhead projector)
 2 OK alright now we're going to leave his music there. OK? now
 3 I said that we were going to go on, (0.5) we're also going to
 4 look at his character and his life (0.5) alright (0.5) can you
 5 look here I think maybe you'll have to turn. do you know the
 6 answers to any of these questions? (1.0) when was he born?
 7 LL: don't know
 8 T: you don't know?
 9 LL: no
 10 L: ↑good
 11 LL: hah hah
 12 T: where was he born?
 13 LL: Liverpool
 14 T: Liverpool alright. who were his parents? you don't know?
 15 LL: no
 16 T: ↑good
 17 LL: hah hah
 18 T: what kind of child was he?
 19 LL: what kind of child.
 20 L: lonely
 21 T: lonely? you don't know
 22 LL: no
 23 T: ↑good
 24 LL: hah hah
 25 T: alright. how did he learn to play music? Do you know?
 26 LL: no
 27 T: ↑good
 28 LL: hah hah
 29 T: where did he meet the other Beatles?
 30 LL: in school, in school, school.
 31 T: really?
 32 LL: yes, yes
 33 T: in college?
 34 LL: yes, yes.
 35 T: you sure?
 36 LL: yes, yes
 37 T: when did the Beatles begin?
 38 L: when they were 15
 39 T: (1.0) are you sure?
 40 LL: where, where.
 41 L: Liverpool
 42 T: when.
 43 L: when.when.when
 44 T: what year? You don't know?
 45 L: no
 46 T: ↑good
 47 LL: hah hah
 48 T: who was their manager? You don't know
 49 LL: we don't know
 50 T: ↑good

(British Council 1985, Volume 4, 25)

The feature of the above interaction which appears bizarre and problematic on the surface is that when the learners are unable to answer the teacher's question, the teacher evaluates the learners' ignorance positively with 'good'. When the learners are able to give a correct answer to the teacher's question, however, the teacher gives a fairly non-committal evaluation ('alright'). On the video we can note that 'good' is pronounced with deliberate and stressed articulation and a rising intonation, whereas 'alright' is uttered with falling intonation and without any prosodic marking. It can also be seen on the video that the learners find this strange, in that they laugh after each occasion that the teacher says 'good'. Now when we read further on in the transcripts we learn what the teacher's pedagogical focus was in the previous section:

Extract 9

T: 'Now there are a lot of questions there some of them you know the answers to, some of them you don't know the answers to. Now what I'm going to do is I'm going to give you an article which is taken from a newspaper article that was written about John Lennon after he died, in an English newspaper. Write in note form and also scan, pick, choose select. The article is long, it's got information which isn't all relevant to the task so I want you to pick and choose.'

(British Council 1985, Volume 4: 25)

So the main context will be a text-based context and the above extract was a pre-reading activity, an introduction and 'warmer' prior to the reading of a text. We need to bear in mind that the overall purpose of a text-based context is to familiarise learners with a text. Now the pre-reading task established a rationale for the text reading, that is, it established that the learners did not know certain information about John Lennon. The learners should then be motivated to find the information out during the reading. Here we have a functional explanation for the teacher evaluating positively the learners' ignorance. If they already knew an answer, then there would be no real reason or motivation for them to read the text. If, however, they didn't know the answer, they should 'experience' an information gap and have a strong motivation to do the reading. This is confirmed by ethnographic information in an interview with the teacher. Each child will have to read a separate piece of information, then pool the information in a 'jigsaw' reading task:

Extract 10

'If you've got the jigsaw reading established you've got an automatic information gap created which they have to bridge and fill. So it's a way of giving a purpose and a motivation for reading.'

(British Council 1985, Volume 4, 26)

So we can see that the teacher is able to generate an element of mystery, suspense and motivation by normative reference to the context-free organisation of the L2 classroom.

In the extract below we see very strange and puzzling teacher behaviour in which the teacher creates a 'fake' pedagogical focus; the real focus is 'camouflaged' until later. Of course the norm is for teachers to make the pedagogical focus as clear as possible, so this is another example of flouting the norms.

Extract 11

1 T: could you please repeat after me OK ((T speaks inaudibly))
 2 L1: (1.0) I don't understand
 3 LL: hah hah hah
 4 T: don't you? repeat after me ((T speaks inaudibly))
 5 L1: more loud please
 6 T: pardon
 7 L1: (0.5) I don't understand
 8 T: don't you (.) listen again, listen again
 9 L1: what, what are you saying
 10 T: ((T speaks inaudibly))
 11 L1: (2.0) I: hhh I:
 12 T: you don't understand me?
 13 L1: I don't understand
 14 T: oh that's terrible I'll try Wafaa Wafaa repeat after me
 15 repeat after me ((T speaks inaudibly))
 16 L2: I don't hear you
 17 T: no? so what do you say?
 18 L3: (1.0) I beg your pardon but I don't understand
 19 T: I see, and what do you say then
 20 LL: you say you say could you could you please
 21 T: Mrs Khadraoui has got a good one here. Listen.
 22 L4: yes, could you please er speak loudly
 23 T: (1.0) pardon, would you mind repeating that please?
 24 L4: could you please er speak clearly and loudly
 25 T: (1.0) yes of course Mrs Khadraoui, do excuse me, yes OK and
 26 um er (0.5) could you then write this on the board for me
 27 please if you write this in your books please ok?
 28 ((T writes in tiny, unreadable script))
 29 LL: oh no hhhahhah
 30 L: we don't understand
 31 L: we can't write anything
 33 L: we can't
 34 L: yes
 35 L: please would you mind er writing er
 36 T: listen, let's listen to Boujemaa. oh, she's got fantastic
 37 eyes hasn't she?
 38 L5: please er:: would you er mind writing er more clearly?
 39 T: certainly excuse me excuse me, I'm sorry Abdelmajid is that
 40 better? alright then that's fine enough OK
 (7 lines omitted)
 48 T: OK now, you've just been asking me to do things you've just
 49 been asking me to do things. OK I've got a cassette here I'd
 50 like you to listen to now
 51 I just want you to tell me what the people say when they ask
 52 someone to do something OK? Listen.

(British Council 1985, Volume 2: 17)

What the teacher is doing in the above extract is creating situations in which the learners have to make polite requests. This is stated explicitly in an interview with the teacher (British Council 1985, Volume 2, 17):

Extract 12

'I'm going to start off by putting them in a position where they need to make requests, er the reason for doing this is partly to find out how much they already know and also to see which structures they they would choose to use.'

The 'fake' focus is for learners to repeat after the teacher (line1) and copy the teacher's writing (line 27). The 'camouflaged' real focus is for the learners to make requests to the teacher. However, he does not target particular linguistic forms, and in fact he says in the interview quoted above that he is interested in seeing which linguistic forms they use to carry out the function of requesting. Any linguistic forms which perform the function of polite requests would be acceptable, but the string must be correctly formed. It is clear from the teacher's repair initiations in lines 6, 17, 19 and 23 that the teacher is not accepting utterances on the basis of their communicative value: he keeps initiating repair until a learner produces the request function in a linguistically correct format. In the above extract, flouting the norms creates a situation in which the learners feel the need to perform a communicative function (request) and must package the function in linguistically correct forms in order to do so.

We can see in extracts 8 and 11 that teachers can create particular effects by deliberately flouting or undermining the normal organisation of the L2 classroom; this demonstrates the normative nature of the organisation. Why would teachers do this, though? Van Lier (1988, 30) says that 'We have failed to consider the communication potential of the L2 classroom itself, and the authentic resources for interaction it has to offer.' Communicative methodology aims to create a 'genuine' reason for students to speak in the classroom (Harmer 1983), but the degree of 'genuineness' is often open to debate. There may be a difference between the theorist's or teacher's etic characterisation of a task-as-workplan as providing a genuine reason for communication and the learners' emic analysis of the task-in-process. In extract 11 we can see that the teacher is using the 'communication potential' of the classroom and creating a situation in which learners actually see the need to make requests; it can be seen from the video that the learners are genuinely puzzled by the teacher's behaviour. In conclusion, we can see that even cases in which teachers flout the interactional organisation in creative ways are nonetheless analysable using the methodology described in Seedhouse (2004, 194) precisely because the organisation is a normative one.

Implications

The implications of the article are as follows. Less experienced teachers need to learn how to establish L2 classroom contexts. CA analyses of how exactly this can be delivered successfully (see Seedhouse 2004, 215) can be used for teacher education. Moreover, analyses of how exactly this can go wrong (as in extract 6 above) can be equally useful. More experienced and skilful teachers may also benefit from the analysis of lessons in terms of expanding their repertoire of teaching techniques. Such expert teachers have become totally proficient in establishing L2 classroom contexts and are often interested in learning techniques to achieve more subtle educational effects or ways to motivate specific groups or

individuals. In extracts 8 and 11, we have seen expert teachers creating innovative techniques to enhance student interest and engagement precisely by normative reference to the organisation of L2 classroom contexts.

We can see from the deviant cases, then, that L2 classroom contexts are interactional organisations which are actively constructed and maintained by experienced teachers. Without careful management there can be confusion as to which context is in operation at any given time. Creating and shifting a focus is a skill which is acquired through experience. Without careful management, there can be confusion as to what the focus is at any given time. The unsuccessful extract was taught by an inexperienced trainee teacher and it is possible to draw certain conclusions from it. It is easy to confuse learners with respect to classroom procedures and as to which focus is in operation at a particular time. It is best to state explicitly what the pedagogical focus is, and it is best to introduce one pedagogical focus at a time, otherwise learners may become confused. It is best for procedural instructions to be as full and explicit as possible whilst presenting a single, undiluted focus. A similar point is also made by Johnson (1995, 163):

‘Explicit directions and concrete explanations can help second language students recognize the implicit norms that regulate how they are expected to act and interact in classroom events. Without such explicitness, second language students can become confused about what is expected of them, or how they should participate.’

It is necessary to look at the micro-detail of the interaction to establish how and why classroom procedures succeed or fail. It is unlikely that this level of detail will be evident to trainees in videos alone, whilst transcripts alone are not able to contextualise the interaction vividly enough. I have shown the video of the trainee teacher failing to establish the pedagogical focus a number of times in seminars and classes. After watching the video but without having seen the transcripts, participants are normally able to identify the problem, i.e. that the teacher has failed to establish a focus. However, participants are generally unable to establish the reason for this failure. It is only when the participants read the transcript that it becomes evident to them that there are clear reasons for this failure and that they are able to identify these. It is suggested that fine-grained CA analysis of transcripts may be combined with video to create a powerful induction tool into professional discourse for trainee or newly qualified L2 teachers. A general framework for this process might look as follows (Seedhouse 2008, 2009):

- (1) Make videos and transcripts of both experienced and inexperienced L2 teachers in a variety of typical professional situations with students.
- (2) Identify in the fine detail of the interaction those interactional issues which may lead to a more or less successful conclusion of the interaction.
- (3) Identify in the fine detail of the interaction those key interactional devices which are used by experienced professionals and analyse how they use them. The example in this article is the establishment of a pedagogical focus by an experienced teacher. Disseminate findings to trainee and new teachers using video combined with transcripts.

Conclusions

The norms for interactional organisation in ordinary conversation (turn-taking, sequence and repair) were stated in the 1970s by Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson and associates in context-free terms; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974); Schegloff and Sacks (1973); Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977). The interactional organizations (turn-taking, sequence, repair) themselves are stated in context-free terms, but the vital point is that participants employ these context-free organizations in a context-sensitive way to display their social actions. It is because the participants (and we as analysts) are able to identify the gap between the context-free model and its context-sensitive implementation that they (and we as analysts) are able to understand the social significance of the context-sensitive implementation. As Schegloff (2000) writes, 'specific action outcomes may be produced by reference to the "one-party-at-a-time" norm of turn-taking, even though they are realized through deliberately simultaneous talk'.

In a similar way, Seedhouse (2004) described how L2 classroom interaction is organised (in context-free terms), outlining how L2 classroom contexts work in relation to turn-taking, sequence and repair. This article has shown that L2 classroom contexts are not neat organisations to which all participants orient assiduously. As with conversation, participants in L2 classroom interactions are sometimes engaged in grappling for the direction of interaction; sometimes there is confusion about what is happening; sometimes teachers fail to establish a focus; some people are trying to achieve particular interactional effects by flouting the norms. In this article, we can see that this architecture is oriented to and utilised by teachers and students in many different ways and creates many different effects.

In this article we have seen that L2 classroom contexts are not rigid straitjackets, any more than the organisations of turn-taking, sequence and repair in conversation. Rather, they are points of reference which enable speakers to understand each other. In the case of children learning to interact in their L1, we observe them having teething difficulties with these systems, then mastering their use, then as adults manipulating the norms in increasingly sophisticated ways to perform complex social actions. L2 classroom contexts are the interfaces between pedagogy and interaction and appear to have evolved over time as the most economical means of delivering the institutional business of language learning. We see trainee L2 teachers making a mess of establishing L2 classroom contexts, then mastering them as they become proficient teachers, then manipulating the norms in increasingly sophisticated and creative ways to create special effects, as in extracts 8 and 11. L2 classroom contexts help teachers and learners to orientate themselves in interaction and to carry out the business of instructed L2 learning. L2 classroom contexts are also points of orientation which enable us as observers and analysts to analyse the interaction from the perspectives of the participants. In the introduction the question was asked: is the analytical framework and methodology presented in Seedhouse (2004) still able to provide meaningful and useful analyses when things do not go to plan in L2 lessons, or is it simply a fair-weather framework and methodology which cannot cope with turbulence? This article has shown that it provides a compass to maintain our bearings in choppy classroom seas and produces useful analyses.

Notes

1. An anonymous reviewer noted that 'in Extract 2, the student seems to be using the space after a completed activity to perform a different, joking action with a fellow student, and the teacher goes along with the student's new agenda by participating in it.' So in this case the grappling has resulted in the teacher giving ground by validating the learner's new agenda, but also maintaining ground in the speech exchange system by taking part in it him/herself, rather than letting the learners speak exclusively to each other.
2. A set of 16 videoed lessons recorded by Peck in five European countries and donated to the author.

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